



Board Community Conversation

1.19.2023

Please note, questions and answers were recorded in the order in which they were received.

1. **Question:** What measures at the district level are being taken to address teacher retention and recruitment? What can community members do beyond being part of the PTA to help teachers?

Response:

Teacher retention is a national problem. UEA recently released a list of teacher turnover rates in the metroplex. MISD ranked 4th lowest out of 43 districts with a 13.30% turnover rate. We are low compared to other districts, but we are still very concerned. We are part of a research study that pulls in teachers to get their feedback. The next step will be to move into the problem-solving phase. We are concerned about all staff, but especially teachers because it impacts kids the most. Additional paperwork required by teachers and staff is one factor. Some things are mandated, but we need to look at what the district can take off of teachers' plates to help ease their loads.

Dr. Cantu has also put together a group (separate from the study) of staff from various campuses to gain feedback. She is also very visible on campuses throughout the district.

2. **Question:** Do you think you are getting honest feedback? Some teachers are afraid to speak up and want to remain anonymous. Is there an opportunity for feedback to be anonymous from the teachers?

Response:

We are looking into that.

Additional HR Response:

The Teacher moral survey and district-wide employee survey are both completed anonymously.

3. **Question:** Have you considered a 4-day work week?

Response:

It is being discussed with ESC 10 and ESC 11. The majority of districts who have done so are small and it seems to work for them. There are pros and cons (child care for working parents, implications for local businesses. We will continue to study and watch surrounding districts who are implementing the four-day week in their district as well as carefully follow any related legislation this session.

4. **Question:** How short are we on teachers? Where does the district's teacher retention report originate?

Response:

We are never completely full; but for the most part, as teachers leave, we are able to fill those positions. Paraprofessional positions, especially Special Education aides, are the most difficult to fill.

5. **Question:** Do we ever pull specialists to teach? Why do we have so many good teachers out of the classroom as specialists?

Response:

We have to balance the work they do to help teachers across the district with the work they would do in one classroom.

6. **Question:** Are we looking at working with the City to see if there are incentives they can offer to teachers?

Response:

Yes, the district and the City have had several recent discussions regarding possible incentives for teachers.

7. **Question:** My child has been undergoing a threat assessment. He is only 6. It has been very traumatic for him and our family. Do you think a 5-year-old should undergo the same threat assessment process as a 16-year old? Do you think parents should be included in this process? How many parents don't know about the questions that are asked? They ask questions about suicide and whether their parents love them. Allow parents to be more involved.

Response:

Yes, the questions should be age appropriate. The idea of a threat assessment is to get our kids help, and some very young kids need help. We do this to provide interventions as soon as possible.

8. **Question:** Why are the threat assessment questions not on the website? They are not on the Texas School Safety website either. Are we going to stop this process and reassess? The impact of kids being pulled out and questioned has a negative impact.

Response:

The questions that are provided are baseline questions. Sometimes those questions lead to other questions during the conversation with the student. The threat assessment program is relatively new. It is mandated, so the district cannot stop it completely. However, we can look at ways for improving the process. Children are not assessed unless a staff member reports it. We will look at it and see how we can improve it. It is not intended to be punitive. It is intended to help children at the earliest stage.

9. **Question** Parent concern regarding the Threat Assessment Department and how they are implementing the Salem-Keizer System, specifically, Step 1 to determine the need for Level 1 screening. Can we have the student talk to someone else they know, like a teacher or counselor, before going through the threat assessment?

Response: We can look into that. Often times, the initial threat assessment referral comes from a teacher or a counselor who has an existing relationship with the student.

10. **Question:** What do current Board members consider important qualities in school board candidates this election cycle?

Response:

Ms. Farrar: Good leadership skills; the ability to work with people that you don't always agree with; working together as a community to find solutions

Ms. Newsom: Good communicator, willing to think outside the box; the willingness to understand other folks who have a different experience than our own; being a team builder, understanding the role of the board member.

Mr. Tipping: Willingness to learn; to grow in your outlook of what it means to be a school board member, able to roll up your sleeves and work-- it's a time commitment – you have to put lots of time into it to be successful.

- 11. Question:** There was a racial incident at Summit High School last semester. What has happened in the last 90 days to change that hostile environment? What are the tangible things being done at Summit HS to address what happened? What are the next steps/? What is the accountability to prevent it from happening at other campuses?

Response:

We are in conversations with Philip O'Neal (Executive Director of Athletics). He has had conversations with that campus and all of the coordinators at other campuses so that he can move forward with training and other support.

Additional Campus Response:

The incident that occurred during was part of an athletic Halloween dress up practice, which has been an ongoing athletic tradition at Summit. As soon as administration was notified of the photo, they launched a thorough investigation. The students involved were identified and confirmed that they had been willing participants in the photo. All involved students were punished in accordance with the student code of conduct. Practice dress up days are no longer permitted at Summit.

The investigation and evidence suggest that this was a bad decision made by a small number of students and is not indicative of the athletic programs or overall culture of Summit High School. The athletic programs use their character-building platform with athletes. During the school day, advisory time is used to focus on social and emotional needs, positive character lessons and activities that help continue to support a strong and healthy culture at Summit High School.

- 12. Question:** The DEI position still has not been filled. The committee has not met. What are you as a Board doing to support the superintendent to make sure this position is hired?

Response:

A person will be recommended for approval at the board meeting Tuesday night. The Board was instrumental in helping to examine the position and look for ways to improve and expand its scope.

The work is always ongoing with DEI. Even though someone has not been in that position, the work of DEI never stopped. In January, the new person will come on board and get acclimated. Meetings should begin in February.

- 13. Question:** What are the key differences between the DEI position as it was and what it is now?

Response:

The previous position was solely DEI; now it includes the supervision of some principals at campuses. It's still DEI and under the Curriculum Department; but now we have someone who understands how schools work, how hiring occurs, SEL, etc. This person will be more involved in schools.

14. Question: Have we amended our emergency response process since COVID, the cyber-attack and other emergent incidents.?? Have we added procedures to ensure that school continues during catastrophic situations?

Response:

Health services has revamped the protocols for COVID and posted them on their website. Technology has spent a lot of time and money to put security measures in place to avoid future cyber-attacks.

15. Question: Are we going to look into hiring more police officers?

Response:

We have a full-time officer designated at every campus. We are constantly hiring officers. We have 5 in the academy right now who will soon graduate. City of Mansfield and City of Arlington help fill it when officers are out sick. There are only a handful of districts who have an officer at every campus. We have carved out the funds because safety is a priority.

16. Question: I have a daughter who was diagnosed with a critical medical issue. She is part of the Sped program. The exemption policy in Mansfield is tied to absences. My daughter will never be exempt. This encourages parents and kids to go to school sick. It also punishes kids with chronic illness. Is there any way to look at the exemption policy and not tie it to absence? Is there an exemption that can be put into place for kids that have an IEP under OHI for absences? It's not equitable for students.

Response:

The policy has been around since the nineties. It was created to get kids to come to school. However, the world has changed. We need to look at the consequences of sending kids to school who may be sick.

17. Question: With all of the safety issues, is there anything we can do about the high school bathrooms? The bathroom at Legacy was closed because of safety issues.

Response:

Let's have a conversation with the principal. We also need to bring all of the principals together to discuss solutions and gain insight as to how they are handling the situation at their campuses.

Additional Student Services and Curriculum & Instruction Responses:

(C&I) - Campus safety specialists make routine visits to the restrooms throughout the day when they check doors and other safety-check responsibilities. APs and teachers stand by their offices/classroom during passing periods to assist with supervision.

Procedures vary based on campus layout and available staff during different periods of the day. From a high school principal - "We monitor restrooms throughout the day – especially during passing periods. Our PD helps with this as well. We must continue to remain diligent. We have limited restroom access at lunch in the café to three males and three females at a time. We have 24 unlocked restrooms throughout the day – 12 male and 12 female (not including the gym area and locker rooms)."

(Student Services) -We have a significant increase in behaviors being addressed in the restrooms, mostly controlled substances. This year's increase is due to an increase in supervision in the restrooms with the safety specialist's routine checks of restrooms. Last year at the halfway point of the school year we had 65 referrals and this year we had 130.

Question that was submitted on written card but not asked:

18. Question: Why are IEPs in MISD not being followed?

Curriculum & Instruction Department Response: If a child is eligible for special education services, the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee is required to develop an individualized education program (IEP). If a parent feels that the IEP is not being followed, he/she should contact the campus to set up a meeting to review the IEP.